

If asked how he expected to spend his day, Bril never would have guessed it would be doing starship repossession. He just stared at his two masters with a befuddled expression on his face. Any moment now, one of them would crack a smile and tell him that this was all some elaborate ruse ... right? That smile never came.

“My father taught me to never belittle the work of others, so I won’t say this kind of mission is beneath me, but...” Bril paused for a moment to look at the image of the Tartan-class Patrol Cruiser on his datapad. How was he even supposed to get this back to the Dajorra System? He couldn’t fly a ship, especially not one this large. He clicked his teeth while looking back to the Mirialan-Pantoran pair standing before him.

“...Surely my talents are better suited elsewhere.”

His master and Proconsul, Ruka, spoke first. “Sometimes, we’ve gotta do things we don’t wanna, ay? There’s more to life than studying and training, Bril. You took up those robes, that means you have ‘ta serve the people, too.”

He looked down at his robes, his own modified version of those worn by Lotus members—of those worn by Ruka and Cora themselves. Well, he knew that, of course. But why did that mean he had to do *this* thing? Before he could offer a rebuttal of his own, the Pantoran Jedi, Cora, chimed in.

“And as it turns out, young Bril, your talents are the best person we could think of to complete this task. This isn’t a simple repossession mission.”

“Then, what is it?”

He watched as both men exchanged glances as if trying to decide who’d be the one to tell him. After what seemed like an eternity, Ruka stepped forward. “We’ve received reports that any I.C.A employees sent to collect the ship are now refusing to do so. Fights’ve broken out, even. They’re saying the ship is haunted.”

Bril’s eyebrows rose at that comment. “Haunted?” he asked, voice awash with incredulity.

Ruka lifted his shoulders in a slight shrug. “Ay. That’s what they’re saying.”

What? Now, he was one of those paranormal investigators on the holonet that he and Minnow sometimes made fun of?

He folded his arms in front of his chest and nodded while responding with a protracted “okay.”

“I guess I’ll go check it out, then. See you later, Masters.” Bril lowered his head in a bow before turning to exit.

Once he’d left the room, he thumbed through the list of contacts on his datapad until he found the name listed as “Pur’ka” and cracked a smile while looking at it. He opened the communications feed and quickly began typing a message:

B: Misters Ruka and Cora are sending me on a mission to investigate a supposedly haunted starship. Can you believe it? We were just watching one of those silly shows.

It wasn’t long until several messages came in from the other end, causing the Zabrak’s hearts to flutter a bit when he saw them.

P: That's a crazy coincidence, Kitty! Out shopping w/ Ellybelle and Sofikins.

P: Might b a while, but will send u holopics. Saving the spicy outfits for when u come, tho. (;

P: Oh! And remember not to talk to the ghosts when you get there. Hellooo? Is there anyone here who can hear me?

Minnow’s silliness never failed to make him smile. And that second message, jeez. How he ever got anything done with her constant teasing was a mystery to even him. He shook his head, replied with a quick “I love you” in Zabraki, and then went on his way.

Gilletta Spaceport

The smell of starship fuel made the inside of Bril's nose itch. How so many pilots, his own girlfriend included, could stand the smell escaped him. Minnow even claimed to enjoy it, much to his concern. Surely, smelling inhaling the fumes of such volatile compounds in any degree didn't bode well for one's health. When he returned, he'd have to ask Sivall about any known links between respiratory illness and prolonged exposure to starship fuel. But for now, he had a haunted ship to investigate.

Swift footfalls carried the young gray Jedi into the Spaceport proper, passed a group of men who were discussing who they thought would win in today's fathier races, and beyond the twi'lek man whose job it was to direct incoming ships to their appropriate moorings. His presence earned him more than a few looks, most of which seemed like curious glances, but there were a vanishing few that scowled at him as he passed. His masters had told him that the Selenian public were more aware now of Arcona's influence over their lives than they ever had been. It came as no surprise to him that some resented that influence. Those whose minds did project ire toward him earned themselves a polite nod back. Bril couldn't change their minds about Force users overnight, but he could at least show that he didn't mean them any harm.

Amongst the citizens moving about the bustling spaceport stood a Iakaru male dressed in a white and gray jumpsuit with the letters "I.C.A" emblazoned on its chest patch. He was a full head taller than the others who wore similar outfits, and he spoke with a husky voice while seemingly chewing them out. Bril could feel the nervous energy leaping from the minds of the other I.C.A employees, and it made him uncomfortable.

Lifting a hand to his mouth, he cleared his throat to interrupt the verbal grilling. "Excuse me. I was sent to assist you in the reclamation of this ship."

The Iakaru turned and stepped forward. He was so tall that even Bril was left staring at the tuft of dark brown fur surrounding his chin.

"And who are *you*?"

Threatening as his posture was, Bril didn't shrink away from him; instead, he brushed his cloak backward to flash his crossguard lightsaber, Concord. "A friend," he offered in a matter-of-fact tone.

Recognition flashed across the man's face. Then anger.

"Great. First, the karkin' owner, or former owner of this ship comes in here babbling nonsense like a broken jukebox. Then, my own crew doesn't want to do their job because they say the karkin' ship is possessed; now, a karkin' Jedi is showing up to 'help' us."

Bril shook his head. "Not a Jedi. But, what do you mean the owner was 'babbling nonsense'? What did they say?"

"See for yourself. He's been doing it since he got here. Guy has a screw loose."

He gestured toward a human man who was sitting against the back wall with his knees pulled up to his chest. The man was sickeningly gaunt, so frail, in fact, that Bril feared that even too strong a breeze could break the poor man in two. His sunken eyes stared at the duracrete floor beneath them while he muttered something beneath his breath. Bril stepped forward slowly, careful not to startle the man, and kneeled in front of them while turning his head to listen more carefully.

Over and over again, the man repeated the words: "shreeka ... rae ... ka ... rae ... shreeka rae ... ka rae ... ka rae ..."

The words didn't sound like any language he'd heard before, but Bril knew he'd have to take them to someone more knowledgeable in linguistics to himself to know for sure. A few tests of the man's responsiveness revealed that he wasn't at all. What had happened to him? Whatever had caused it, the man clearly needed medical attention, so Bril took a moment to call the best person he knew for the job. He tapped on his beskar vambrace a few times before extending his arm to place himself in view of its holoprojector feed. Shortly afterward, the familiar image of a familiar Chiss woman materialized before him.

Sivall, dressed in the garb of the Envoy Society, greeted him with a smile at first, but her expression soured a bit when she saw the concern on her adoptive brother's face.

"What is it, *botmun'i*?" she asked.

"Investigating a ship that's due to be repossessed. Its former owner is conscious but unresponsive. He's in rough shape, *lora*. Do you have time to come check him out? We're at the Giletta Spaceport."

Sivall nodded before he even finished his explanation, having already understood what he was going to ask her. "Of course. Just give me a bit to finish up here and I'll be there when I can."

"Thanks, Sivall. See you soon."

The holoprojector faded.

With that business taken care of, Bril turned back to the ship. Although he wouldn't call it haunted, something about it was certainly off putting. It was the first time he encountered a ship steeped in Dark Side energy. And there was a lot of it. Bril took a breath to steady himself before continuing forward, focusing his senses to pinpoint what was responsible for the aura he detected. Like a signaling beacon set to its highest frequency, Dark Side energy reverberated from the ship's hull in greatest concentration near the middle of the cruiser.

After fetching himself a ladder, Bril secured beneath one of the cruiser's laser cannons and quickly ascended it to have a closer look.

"What's this?" he said to himself upon spotting a tear in the hull.

His senses were practically screaming at him, now, alerting him to the presence in the Force that swelled and thrummed like a beating heart. He extended his hand and brushed the tips of his gloved hand along the tear. When he did, images of the Tartan-class Patrol Cruiser flying through a debris field flashed across his mind's eye. Asteroids and scrap metal seemingly came

out of nowhere, forcing the ship to take evasive maneuvers that ultimately saved everyone onboard. But not without taking some damage in the process.

Bril took a moment to center himself again after the vision passed, and didn't hesitate in reaching inside the hole. There was something there; he could just feel it.

A jolt of excitement rippled through him when his fingers brushed against something jagged, prompting him to curl his fingers around it so he could give it a good pull. To Bril's surprise, the object was a crystal of some sort. It was large enough to fill his palm and the color of deep lavender with what looked like thin etchings lining its surface with no discernible pattern. There was no doubt that this was the culprit he'd been searching for. It reeked of the Dark Side, and pulsed more energetically in his hand after picking it up.

It resembled a kyber crystal of some sort, but none with which he was familiar. He'd have to take it to his masters to see if they could help identify it before running some tests of his own. Whatever it was, it was dangerous. After descending from the ladder, Bril allowed his crystal blue eyes to settle on the sickly-looking man again, a frown appearing on his face when he saw that his condition hadn't improved.

"Don't worry, we're going to get you help soon," he muttered.

As he regarded the man with a worried expression, a voice he recognized as Sivall's called from Bril's right. "Is that him?"

"Yeah," answered Bril, following closely behind his sister. She was carrying a metal case that he presumed was full of her supplies. "He was like this when I got here."

"It's good that you called me, Bril. I'll do what I can."

Bril nodded in thanks, and took a step back to give her room to work. He lifted a hand to signal to the I.C.A crew that they could begin their repossession before returning his attention to Sivall and the pallid man she was attempting to help. Reporting back to his masters could wait. This man needed help first.